

Website promotes Metro events, helps charities

Eric LEwis Times & Transcript

A new website aims to connect Metro Monctonians with community events while also giving back to local charities.

A revamped MyCommunityCalendar.ca is now live, offering charities, community groups, businesses and anyone else the opportunity to promote their events for free.

The site was originally launched last summer, but grew so quickly it was retooled later in the year to be more user friendly.

The site aims to be a catch-all, promoting every kind of community event, from concerts to pool tournaments to swim lessons, happening in Metro Moncton.

While a web-based calendar of events isn't unique, what is unique is how the site will benefit charities. Local non-profits who wish to get involved can sell advertising space on the website; any charity that sells an ad will receive 40 per cent of the profits.

The remaining 60 per cent will go to the Seniors' Information Centre of Moncton, which operates the website. Their percentage will cover operational costs for the website as well as provide them with some sustainable funding for their operations.

"It's charities helping charities," said Tony Hebert, a longtime volunteer in Moncton who has been one of the driving forces behind the website. He is also a member of the Seniors' Information Centre board.

Businesses advertising on MyCommunityCalendar.ca are charged based not on placement of an ad, but on the number of views registered. Ads sell for \$75 or \$100 per thousand views, depending on size.

Hebert said that a local charitable foundation, which wishes to remain anonymous, built the website and came up with the business model, and is turning over the intellectual property, operational expertise, web portal and all copyrights to the Seniors' Information Centre at no cost to the centre.

"They've been involved in a very many things," Hebert said of the website developers, which took on all of the risk in developing the business. "They like to get into areas where they can make a difference."

Hebert is the same way.

"When I sold my own business and retired three years ago, I had a plan," he said. "My plan was to work full-time for charity. It's very enjoyable for me. I really like what I'm doing."

MyCommunityCalendar.ca had 1,900 views and more than 600 events and activities listed in December.

There is no fee for non-profits to advertise their events, and businesses and other for-profit ventures are not currently being charged either, however Hebert a small fee will likely be charged to businesses in the future.

He said anti-spam legislation introduced last year now prevents businesses and non-profits from emailing people without first receiving their permission. That limits how non-profits can reach potential clients and donors, and the new website aims to fill that void.

"MyCommunityCalendar is a managed, synchronized community calendar of all calendars," he said.

There are pages on the website specific to events aimed at seniors and events aimed at youth.

Rebecca Campbell, director of sustainable development of the Boys and Girls Club of Moncton, said she thinks it is great that somebody is trying to help non-profits to find sustainable fund.

"Governments are less and less able to help non-profits and there's a lot of donor fatigue in the community," she said. "So for somebody to be developing a way to help charities do that on a sustainable basis is really fantastic."

Peter Beardsworth, chairman of the board with the Seniors' Information Centre, said the website is a useful tool for the centre to get more information out to seniors.

“I think it’s a solid benefit to the community,” he said, adding that he hopes to have events posted from around southeast New Brunswick, including Shediac, Sackville and Bouctouche.

Revenue earned by the Seniors’ Information Centre may help the centre eventually expand its open hours. Run by a volunteer board, the centre currently has one part-time employee.

Hebert said there is a plan in place to basically copy the business and financial plan of MyCommunityCalendar.ca and bring it to other cities in New Brunswick.

For more information, contact Tony Hebert at 859-2489.